

"Jesus Only", Part 3 – Galatians 1:13-24 – July 16th, 2017

- Today's teaching will be part three of a series I've titled, "Jesus Only."
- As we finish the chapter and with it this series, I would like to, by way of a preface, insert this subtitle of "As Only Jesus Can."
- This because, it's Jesus only, as only Jesus can, that takes the Saul's of this world, and makes them into the Apostle Paul's.
- It's for this reason Paul says what he says and even the way he says it in our text today such that man has nothing to do with it.
- This explains why he, in the prior verses, rebukes the Galatian churches concerning being man pleasers and not God pleasers.
- It also explains why it is that Paul by the Holy Spirit is seeking to turn them back to the simplicity of, and reliance on, Jesus only.

4. Who am I relying on? (Verses 13-24)

13 For you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism, how intensely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it. 14 I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers. 15 But when God, who set me apart from my mother's womb and called me by his grace, was pleased 16 to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, my immediate response was not to consult any human being. 17 I did not go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went into Arabia. Later I returned to Damascus. 18 Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Cephas and stayed with him fifteen days. 19 I saw none of the other apostles—only James, the Lord's brother. 20 I assure you before God that what I am writing you is no lie. 21 Then I went to Syria and Cilicia. 22 I was personally unknown to the churches of Judea that are in Christ. 23 They only heard the report: "The man who formerly persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy." 24 And they praised God because of me.

- In verses 13-24 Paul basically shares his testimony about how he was saved, and how that God called him before he was born.
- In so doing he emphasizes that it was the Lord and not man so much so that after he's saved, he doesn't consult with any man.
- He then recalls the account of Jesus revealing Himself while he was on the road to Damascus, which is recorded in Acts nine.

Acts 9:1–9 (NKJV) — 1 Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest 2 and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. 3 As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. 4 Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" 5 And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" Then the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads." 6 So he, trembling and astonished, said, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" Then the Lord said to him, "Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do." 7 And the men who journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice but seeing no one. 8 Then Saul arose from the ground, and when his eyes were opened he saw no one. But they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. 9 And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

- What's interesting about Paul's dramatic conversion is that after he's saved, God isolates him away from man for three years.
- The question becomes on of why? Why would God deem it necessary to take Paul into the desert of isolation, as it were?
- I'm of the belief that it was to teach Paul to totally and utterly depend and rely upon the Lord only, instead of relying on man.
- I'll take this a step further and suggest that in addition to this, the Lord was also teaching Paul not to rely on his own strength.
- The reason I suggest this is because Paul was a very strong man, with a very strong personality, and God had to break that.
- Actually, the Apostle Paul is in good company with the likes of Elijah, John the Baptist, the apostle John and especially Moses.
- Often times, God has to isolate us in the backside of the desert, in order to prepare us for that which He has prepared for us.
- During this process of preparation that allows God to have us all to Himself, He's able to teach us to rely on Him, not our self.
- He accomplishes this by bringing us to the end of our self with a situation that's impossible in and of our self, so we turn to Him.

Matthew 19:26 - But Jesus looked at them and said to them, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

- The problem is, we're always quick to quote this verse about all things being possible for God, but we don't quote the first part.
- The reason I point this out is because unless and until it's impossible for us, it won't and can't be possible for God to do it for us.
- In other words, if it's possible for us by relying on ourselves, then it's hands off to God, until we come to the end of ourselves.

Proverbs 3:5–6 (NKJV) — 5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; 6 In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.

- I'll close by posing two questions that I think we would all do well myself included, to ask ourselves concerning relying on God.
- First, could the reason that impossible situation or that impossible person is in my life be that I'm still trying to resolve it myself?
- Second, if I were to stop relying on my own strength, and start relying on the Lord, what is it that would change in my situation?

Philippians 4:13 (NKJV) — 13 I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

Proverbs 16:9 (NKJV) — 9 A man's heart plans his way, But the LORD directs his steps.

Proverbs 19:21 (NKJV) — 21 There are many plans in a man's heart, Nevertheless the LORD's counsel—that will stand.